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SUBJECT: UAE DISCUSS SECURITY CONCERNS WITH NDU DELEGATION

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 13, senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, and Education met with a visiting delegation from the National Defense University's (NDU) National War College and discussed regional security issues, accompanied by Ambassador and alternatively the DCM. MFA Undersecretary Abdullah Rashid al-Noaimi stated that Iran tops the list of concerns facing the UAE, adding that Iraq's current instability as well as the threat of terrorism in the UAE are close behind. Al-Noaimi stated that all of these problems require international cooperation to address, emphasizing that this is not merely a problem for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) or the Arab League, but for the international community as a whole. End Summary.

¶2. (U) A delegation from the NDU's National War College led by NDU professor Kamal Beyoghlow, visited Abu Dhabi and Dubai May 11-14. The group's program included meetings with Sheikha Lubna al-Qasimi, Minister of Economy, and Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al-Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education, accompanied by the Ambassador, in addition to a meeting with MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid al-Noaimi, accompanied by the DCM. The group also met with business people, media professionals, and students.

Threats to UAE Security

¶3. (C) Starting with a declaration that "we have had enough" of instability and lack of peace in the region, al-Noaimi announced that the UAE places high importance on reaching out to the U.S. in particular and cooperating on our "common concerns and issues." The UAE, he said, aspires to help bring stability in the region and this, in turn, has led the UAE to focus on three primary areas of concern: Iran, Iraq, and terrorism.

Iran) Gulf Security Vacuum
Filled by International Powers

¶4. (C) "Iran concerns us the most," explained al-Noaimi. "They are near, they are large, and they are well armed." Calling the Iranian leadership a "dangerous group of ideologues," he described Iran's recent actions as those of a large country that wants to reclaim "the power and hegemony" that it has known in the past. Al-Noaimi stated that the current problems predate the Mullahs and go all the way back to the era of the Shah. He stated that both the Mullahs and the Shah wanted a "Grand Iran" that would be the major power and act as the policeman for the entire Gulf. In the face of this ambition, he explained, the GCC recognizes that all of the GCC countries combined could not stand up to Iran. "There was a time when the call was to have no foreign

interference in the region," al-Noaimi stated, "but that time is gone." Recognizing that Iran's weapons systems go way beyond defensive needs, and that there is a "security vacuum" left between a strong Iran and a weak GCC, the GCC wants partners "interested in stability" such as the US, UK, France, and Japan. It is only Iran that wants these international powers out, he added.

¶15. (C) Al-Noaimi was quick to point out that the UAE does not have an adversarial relationship with Iran, simply a cautious one. Expounding further, al-Noaimi stated that Iran is a neighbor the UAE wants to live with * since, there is no other option. (In a separate meeting with the NDU group, Economy Minister Sheikha Lubna stated that Iran is among the UAE's largest trading partners and that "they need us and we need them". She went on to say that when the U.N. passes a formal resolution, the UAE would of course comply, but until that time, "Business is business.") Al-Noaimi concluded his comments on Iran by warning that Russia and China are both playing the role of spoiler in Iran by preventing the international community from having a unified voice. He didn't know if the Russians and Chinese had specific objectives or if they were being played by the Iranians, noting that "the Iranians are very good at games and dividing the international community."

Iraq) Its Stability a Strategic Asset

¶16. (C) Al-Noaimi described Iraq as a "strategic asset" for the UAE, explaining that stability in Iraq would lead to greater stability in the entire region. At this time, the UAE's goal is to do whatever it can to assure a united, stable, and prosperous Iraq. Pointing out that while other countries in the region rejected the original ruling council in Iraq as an "American council," the UAE officially received its members in an effort to grant them recognition and legitimacy. Al-Noaimi also reminded the NDU group that when reconstruction first began in Iraq and the U.S., UK,

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Australia, Japan, and Canada were making plans, the UAE was also in Iraq as the only Arab state. He noted that the UAE is there now providing humanitarian aid, and will continue to do so as long as it is needed.

¶17. (C) Al-Noaimi said that the future of Iraq now lies with its leadership. He cautioned that they need to recognize that the concept of 4WI\$@Xx from Iran and Turkey as "very dangerous" and the greatest obstacles to eventual peace. Al-Noaimi warned that Iraq is at a particularly fragile stage and that if the outside interference can be contained for a short time, in the end the Iraqi people will reject them. When asked what Turkey's goal is in interfering, al-Noaimi responded that Turkey, Syria, and Iran all fear the emergence of a strong Kurdish element.

Terrorism) &We are a target

¶18. (C) "We are a target," claimed al-Noaimi. "We face both internal and external threats ... We will work with friends and allies to form a cohesive, preventive policy." In a separate meeting, Sheikha Lubna told the delegation that Emiratis &are born traders" and as such "we have to live by our trade." She explained that the UAEG will do everything possible to combat terrorism, internally and externally, especially in the area of transshipment of terrorist materials, because as traders "it is not in our interest to damage our reputation."

¶19. (C) Speaking of threats close to home, al-Noaimi stated that the UAE has two territorial disputes, one with Saudi Arabia and the other with Iran. The UAE disputes a maritime boundary with the Saudis, and Iran currently occupies three islands in the Gulf that the UAEG claims as their own. Al-Noaimi characterized both issues as "under control" and stated that neither of these issues will ever be allowed to

"flare up" or lead to war, although he stated that there are several issues from the 1974 border agreement that need to be revisited with the Saudis.

¶10. (C) Externally, al-Noaimi stated that the UAE is concerned broadly with the growing Islamic fundamentalism in the region, particularly in Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories. He added that it is in the UAE's interest to leave Lebanon and Syria alone, but that the various factions within each country continue to reach out and try to draw other countries into their disputes in order to gain the strength that they lack at home.

Higher Ed Minister warns of dangers of Fundamentalism

¶11. (C) Higher Education Minister Sheikh Nahyan, who also met with the delegation separately, warned that the problem of Islamic fundamentalism, and terrorist violence in the region, will get worse before it gets better. He stated that fundamentalist ideologies in the region all continue to feed off a common source of hatred: the U.S. relationship with Israel. He explained the Arab view of this relationship saying that it is not just support of Israel that angers Arabs, but that the Arab world sees the U.S. as indiscriminately punishing a nation full of innocent victims (the Palestinians) for the crimes of a few extremists. Sheikh Nahyan added that Pakistan took one positive step towards fighting fundamentalism when it outlawed "madressas," or Islamic schools, but that Pakistan largely failed in its efforts because it failed to offer an alternative at the same time. He proposed that until education and poverty are addressed throughout the region, other efforts to combat terrorism are likely to fail.

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